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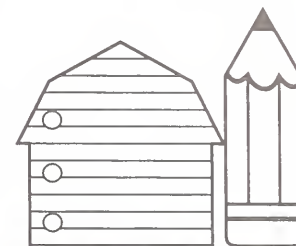
Ag in the Classroom

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Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact the AITC Director, Room 317-A, Administration Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-0991. 202/720-5727

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Vol. IX, No. 6

Young Authors Tell Agriculture's Story in TV Special

One of the purposes of the Ag in the Classroom program is to tell agriculture's story to our next generation. Those who can best communicate with young people are usually others their same age. For the last two years, California's *My Story* contest has encouraged elementary students to write stories about agriculture—stories that are later turned into a prime-time television program.

The writing contest was the result of a partnership among the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, State Compensation Insurance Fund, and Channel 31, a commercial television station serving the Sacramento area.

Students were encouraged to write an original story on an agricultural theme. Suggested topics included producers, crops, farm animals, farm safety, food processing, food production, harvest,

the importance of farming, people in farming and ranching, the role of science and technology, water, and weather. To help prepare students for the contest, teachers were encouraged to bring in guest speakers on agriculture, go to the library to check out books about agriculture, and visit a local farm.

Winners were selected in the following categories: Grades 1-2 (25 - 50+ words), Grades 3-4 (150+ words), and Grades 5-6 (250+ words). To encourage children to use their imaginations, the contest sponsors suggested a number of

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The Cloud That Couldn't Rain

A Prize-winning story by Jenna Epperson
2nd grade, Lakewood School, Modesto

Once there was a cloud named Nimbus. Nimbus noticed the sky was smoggy. He heard somebody coughing and looked down and saw Mr. Johnson the farmer praying for rain. Now when Nimbus heard that, he was sad but he just kept on floating.

The rivers were dry, the grass was yellow, and the flowers were not growing. Suddenly, a seagull flew by and said, "Hey, Nimbus, don't you know we need rain?"

So Nimbus floated over to his friend Cirrus. "Hey, get serious," said Cirrus when he heard Nimbus's complaint. "I only make the sky beautiful over at the beach."

Next, he floated over to Stratus. "Sorry, I can't make it rain," replied Stratus.

Sadly, Nimbus floated back to Mr. Johnson's house. He was so frustrated that he started crying. When Nimbus looked down he couldn't believe he made it rain! All the rivers were filled up and the grass and flowers were growing.

Mr. Johnson and people everywhere were happy. As Nimbus floated away, he saw a rainbow! To him it meant the sign of love.



Editor's Note

They say each of us will live, on average, in 30 places during our lives. Through parents' moves, dorm rooms, first jobs to current jobs, we keep the treasures and discard the old. We are a people of change.

That is what AITC is all about now. We have a new story to tell—about a very different agricultural industry from the homesteaders, or even from the last decade. By necessity, classrooms have become entertainment centers, competing with today's high-tech toys.

Most of all, change offers opportunity. It is time for AITC to grow. This year's annual conference, "Ticket to Teamwork," has the best of the new ideas and a return of the tried-and-true methods to help you build a strong program in your school and state. Check out the agenda in this issue, and sign up for a great summer weekend in Kansas City!



Authors, From Page 1

story ideas. They included "A Vegetable's Journey to the Grocery Store," "Who's Who on the Farm?" and "Instead of MTV, it's Farm TV."

Of the more than 400 entries, judges selected nine (three in each age category), based on their creativity and imagination. Each of the winning students was awarded an ag-related storybook. Each of their teachers won \$100 worth of Ag in the Classroom resources.

Additionally, all winning entries were placed in a drawing for a \$500 "Farm Connection" visit—a display of live farm animals that came to the school. Another student won a field trip to a farm.

The best prize, however, was the opportunity for the young authors to see their stories come to life through artwork and animation. Local junior high and high school students developed illustra-

tions for each of the winning stories. Young actors recorded the sound track. The entire production, including a brief interview with each of the winning authors, was aired in a 30-minute prime-time television special. When the program was premiered, students and teachers—the "stars" of the show—went to the theater in limousines.

This year, the contest has been expanded to a 25-county area in central California. "We are finding that the writing contest has motivated teachers to include more information about agriculture—as well as more opportunities for students to do creative writing," says Judy Colbertson of the California Foundation. The videotape of last year's winning stories has also proved to be popular with teachers. "When students see what others their age have done, it encourages them to do their best," she says.

Career Corner: Agricultural Journalist

The young writers taking part in California's *My Story* competition may not know it, but they could be taking the first step toward a career in agricultural journalism. It's a career that Sonja Hillgren, Washington editor of *Farm Journal*, says is "ever changing . . . and constantly challenging."

She should know. For more than 15 years, Hillgren has been covering agriculture—for United Press International, for Knight Ridder newspapers, and most recently for *Farm Journal*. "I didn't set out to become an agricultural reporter," she says, although the University of Missouri, her alma mater, has an excellent training program in the field. However, once she began writing about agriculture, she was hooked.

"Every time you think that you've done every story and you know every person, something new and different comes along," she says. "For

me, the latest new angle is a very strong emphasis on environmental reporting.

"For example, the Clean Water Act, which is up for consideration before the Congress now, will have such major emphasis on agriculture that it has to be considered a farm bill. Then just around the bend is the Endangered Species Act, which also presents dramatic contrast between the needs of agriculture and the desires of environmentalists in preserving species. Trying to report those stories in the context of what is best for my readers is quite a challenge."

In addition to the intellectual challenge of her career, Hillgren says, agricultural journalism has other side benefits. "One of the greatest things about my job is that farmers and ranchers, and people in associated jobs, are very nice people. In my prior reporting, I did not always find that to be true," she says.

Celebrating Agriculture Week

National Agriculture Day and Week celebrates the many contributions the American food and fiber industries make in meeting the needs of the American people and the world. This year, National Agriculture Day was celebrated on March 20, the first day of spring, and National Agriculture Week March 14 - 20.

Both Agriculture Week and Agriculture Day offer a number of opportunities for the non-farm public to learn more about agriculture. Activities planned especially to introduce children to the world of agriculture can serve a dual purpose: First, they help the next generation become more agriculturally literate. Second, they often are newsworthy

events that attract local newspapers and television stations, thus spreading the message more effectively.

"American Agriculture - Growing Better Everyday" was the theme for the 1994 celebration, focusing attention on the new uses for agricultural products. Today, products ranging from ethanol, an auto fuel derived from corn, to biodegradable plastic film made from wheat starch, are examples of the new uses for products including corn, wheat, and soybeans.

Here are some examples of how schools have incorporated Agriculture Day and Week activities into the curriculum.

Farm Tour Helps City Kids Understand Agriculture

Farm tours are a traditional part of National Agriculture Week. Here's a story of one farm tour conducted by Carl and Maxine Arey of Mt. Solon, Virginia, for the seventh graders from Albert Hill Middle School in Richmond:

When the bus pulled up to Ore Bank Farm, the students were divided into two groups. Fort Defiance FFA members gave a presentation on ag careers to one group. The second bottle fed young calves and lambs in the barn, and then enjoyed a petting farm set up for the day.

Later, student James Lucas said, "I never fed a cow, I never held a bunny, and I never played with a lamb before." Another student, Covey Williams, carried a lamb around the petting shed, then announced, "I'd like to be a farmer."

After that initial introduction, the whole group had a tour of the poultry house. They saw 11,000 young turkeys in one area and 11,000 older birds in another. Some of the students held young turkeys while peppering Carl Arey with questions. Later in the day, student Corey Whisenant said, "If we didn't have agriculture, we wouldn't have Thanksgiving dinner."

The students lunched on locally-grown and processed chicken, milk, and apple juice. Then they boarded the bus to tour the dairy plant that processes milk from the Arey farm. They saw how raw milk becomes processed milk, ice cream, butter, and yogurt. After an ice cream treat with

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Bottle feeding calves was a first-time experience for these city kids.



Sonya Gary held a turkey as part of an Agriculture Week farm tour.

At This School, Ag Was In the Classroom, On the Playground and In the Hallways!

To celebrate Agriculture Day, teacher Anne Fogel transformed her entire school into a living laboratory. Throughout a day-long celebration of

agriculture, students at Town Creek Elementary School could see, smell, hear, and touch ag-related displays.

Actually, the preparation for Agriculture Day had begun much earlier. Mrs. Fogel, the school's resource teacher, spent the year teaching thematic units related to agriculture. They included units on apples, pumpkins, corn, trees, pigs, cows, sheep, and chickens. In the week

before Agriculture Day, students saw farm videos produced by the television series "3-2-1 Contact."

Finally, Agriculture Day arrived. Outside the school, volunteers displayed piglets, calves, a mother goat and two kids, rabbits, and chickens to the school.

A bright red Massey-Ferguson tractor was parked in the schoolyard for students to look at (and climb on). In the parking lot was a fire truck where forest rangers talked to the children about fire safety in the forest and the importance of taking care of our environment.

In the school's media center, older students heard presentations and demonstrations by local experts in agriculture. The local Extension Service shared information on the 4-H programs available



G R O W I N G B E T T E R E V E R Y D A Y

in the county. Another volunteer demonstrated carding and spinning wool. Local farmers shared stories of tobacco farming.

When they returned to their classrooms, children took part in agriculture-related art activities. First graders colored trucks and cut out pictures of farm products. Third graders created seed art pictures.

"It was a busy, exciting day," Fogel reports. "It gave our students a chance to see for themselves many of the things they had only read about."



Teacher Anne Fogel, who coordinated Agriculture Day, with some of the animals



Agriculture Day at Towne Creek School included classroom art activities as well as displays and presentations

Tour, from page 3

dairy officials, Commissioner of Agriculture Clinton Turner, and John Miller, head of the Virginia Dairyman's Association, the students returned to the farm.

They again split into two groups for a repeat of the morning's activities. Students also watched the afternoon milking and spent a few minutes

exploring tractors and other farm implements. As they left, they each received a "goodie bag" donated by area farm groups, implement dealers, and organizations.

Commissioner Turner noted that the children were excited . . . and had learned a lot about agriculture. "I think we need to repeat similar tours," he said, "not just for Ag Week, but at other times of the year."

Sample Proclamation

Maryland Agriculture Week—March 14-20, 1994

WHEREAS Throughout history, agriculture has been regarded as a basic source of goods and products for all people while directly contributing to their comfort, dignity and welfare; and

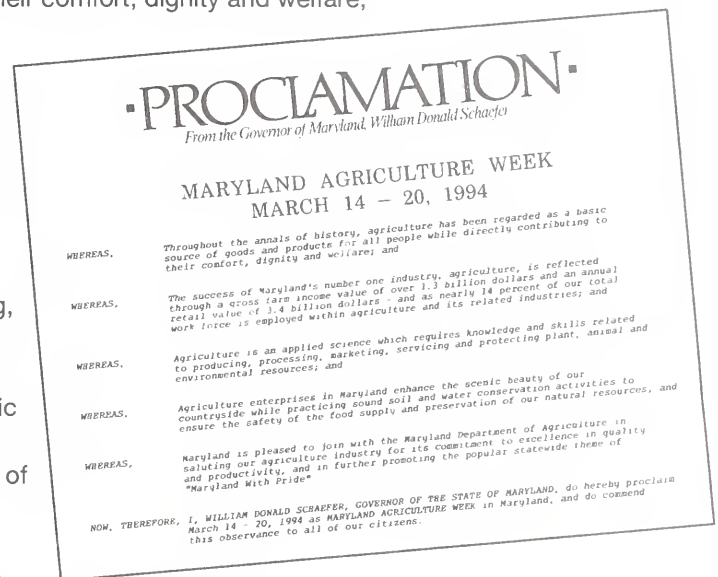
WHEREAS The success of Maryland's number one industry, agriculture, is reflected through a gross farm income value of over 1.3 billion dollars and an annual retail value of 3.4 billion dollars—and as nearly 14 percent of our total work force is employed within agriculture and its related industries; and

WHEREAS Agriculture is an applied science which requires knowledge and skills related to producing, processing, marketing, servicing and protecting plant, animal and environmental resources; and

WHEREAS Agriculture enterprises in Maryland enhance the scenic beauty of our countryside while practicing sound soil and water conservation activities to ensure the safety of the food supply and preservation of our natural resources; and

WHEREAS Maryland is pleased to join with the Maryland Department of Agriculture in saluting our agriculture industry for its commitment to excellence in quality and productivity, and in further promoting the popular statewide theme of "Maryland With Price."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, do hereby proclaim March 14 - 20, 1994 as MARYLAND AGRICULTURE WEEK in Maryland, and do commend this observance to all of our citizens.



Science Project Leads to New Industry

This year's Agriculture Week focuses on new uses for agricultural products. Here's one example your students might enjoy—because it actually developed from a fifth grader's science project. Today, Environ, a mixture of soybean meal and old newspaper, is used to make all kinds of household products.

When a Mankato, MN, student needed to develop a science project, she recalled that her contractor father had often complained about the cost of building materials. She also knew that her county's landfill was rapidly filling up—and that newspapers were a major part of the problem.

So one evening when she was alone, she began experimenting. She dumped newspaper and white glue into her family's blender. Then she cooked the resulting goo in the microwave oven for five minutes.

When her parents came home, they didn't complain about the mess. Instead, they discovered that the girl had invented a material that could

be hammered, sawed, painted, and stained. So the father's next stop was at the patent office.

Before the material could be patented, however, the office needed to know exactly how it was made and how it worked. So the father then began working with scientists at Mankato State University. They found that white glue was too expensive to use in commercial applications. Instead, they substituted soybean meal.

Environ offers many important advantages. The production process creates no pollution. The finished product can be ground up and fully recycled. It will also create an important new market for soybeans—perhaps as many as 11 million bushels per year when the first plant is in operation.

What does it look like? Environ gives the appearance of highly polished granite, but it handles like hardwood. Eventual uses may include furniture, household trims, and even flooring.

"Ticket to Teamwork"

National Ag in the Classroom Conference

Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, Missouri

June 8-11, 1994

Why "Ticket to Teamwork"?

*Teamwork brings together specific talents and skills - a sharing of resources -
for successful achievement towards a common goal.*

*This conference will bring together a network of professional
educators, volunteers, administrators and officials
to improve education nationwide while learning about our nation's largest industry.*

Why Should I Attend?

Increase participation of students & volunteers!

Learn to make the media work for you!

Locate the elusive dollars for your budget!

Take home sure-fire classroom ideas!

Enhance your presentations!

Find success building your team!

HYATT REGENCY CROWN CENTER

Linked by skyway to Kansas City's famous Crown Center, home of Hallmark Cards, shopping, restaurants, and free Friday night concerts, the Hyatt Regency is a choice site for our conference.

Book your reservations DIRECTLY WITH THE HOTEL BY MAY 8th to guarantee space; after then rooms can be reserved only on an as-available basis. The per night rates of \$67 single and \$77 double (including tax), apply two days before and two days after our conference. Be sure to mention *Ag in the Classroom* when you make your reservations. Telephone: (816) 421-1234 or 1-800-233-1234

GROUND TRANSPORTATION from Kansas City International Airport is provided by KCI Shuttle, available at the taxi/bus stand for \$19 round trip.

Don't miss the fun!

**The Kansas City area has
something for everyone!**

**Stay an extra day
to take in the
sights and sounds of
America's heartland!**

- Arabia Steamboat Museum ■
- Country Club Plaza ■
- Crown Center ■
- Hallmark Visitors Center ■
- Jazz Clubs ■
- KC Royals Baseball ■
- KC Zoological Garden ■
- Missouri River Queen ■
- National Agricultural Center ■
- Agricultural Hall of Fame ■
- Oceans of Fun ■
- Swiss Music Box, Ltd. ■
- Trolley Rides ■
- Woodlands Greyhound Racing ■
- Worlds of Fun ■

■ AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS ■

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

Missouri & Kansas are hosts at the American Royal Museum, where we kick off the conference with a light buffet and agriculture lesson while visiting the museum.

- Noon Check-in, Registration, Set-up Exhibits
 1:30 pm Optional Agricultural Tour
 5:00 pm Conference Newcomers Orientation
 AITC State Contacts Meeting
 6:30 pm Opening Session

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

Focusing on teamwork, past teacher and current farmer Jolene Brown begins the session. Workshop & roundtable topics target program coordinators and teachers to provide you with the hottest ideas to take home. The day concludes with "A Night at the Movies".

- 8:00 am Continental Breakfast & Exhibits Open
 9:00 am General Session "TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More!"
 Exhibitors Spotlight
 Workshops (repeated after lunch)
 12:15 pm Lunch
 Roundtables
 6:30 pm Dinner

FRIDAY, JUNE 10

From developing an ambassador program to the "International Candy Bar", the day is full of new ideas for you. Afternoon tours will provide first-hand insight into today's modern agriculture.

- 8:00 am Continental Breakfast & Regional Meetings
 9:00 am General Session "Teamwork in Trade: Why is it Important to Me?"
 Regional Reports
 Two-minute Ideas
 Roundtables
 12:30 pm Board Buses for Lunch
 Agricultural Tours
 4:30 pm Return to Hotel/Evening Open

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

Hear about tried and true activities to excite your kids about learning, or, find out how to obtain those elusive dollars with fund raising methods that really work! Lunch closes the conference with a bang!

- 8:00 am Continental Breakfast & Exhibits Open
 9:00 am Report on Tours
 Concurrent Workshops
 Noon Closing Session & Lunch
 2:00 pm Optional Sightseeing Tour

This is one event you won't want to miss!

Yes, Sign Me Up!

EXHIBIT SPACE

EXHIBIT SPACE is available at no cost. Special arrangements must be made for the hotel to receive any shipped exhibit items; call them direct at (816) 435-4147.

Do you want to reserve exhibit space at the conference?

- ☐ No
- ☐ YES, I will require:
- ☐ 1 table or ☐ 2 tables
- ☐ electric outlet
- ☐ wall space
- ☐ other: _____

Name: _____

Affiliation: _____

Teacher? ☐ No ☐ Yes, Grade Level: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Date of Arrival: _____ Departure: _____

The REGISTRATION FEE includes all meals listed in program; registration & workshop materials; conference proceedings.

Enclosed is my registration fee of:

- ☐ \$100.00 Early Bird (postmarked by April 30, 1994)
- ☐ \$125.00 Regular (after 4/30/94)

Make checks payable to USDA and return with this form to:
 Esther Carter, Ag in the Classroom
 Room 317-A, USDA, Washington, DC 20250-0991

OPTIONAL TOURS

TOURS require a minimum number of participants. You will be notified in advance if the tour is to be canceled.

Please sign me up for the tours indicated. I understand that I will be charged an additional fee at registration.

- ☐ AGRICULTURAL TOUR
 Wednesday, June 8, 1:30-4:30 pm, \$10
Gain an understanding of a farmer's diversity as you visit a livestock and grain operation in eastern Kansas
- ☐ SIGHT SEEING TOUR
 Saturday, June 11, 2:00-5:00 pm, \$10
From music boxes to exotic animals, enjoy the history and adventure of our host city

Ag in the Classroom---State Contacts

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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Ag in the Classroom Notes

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